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ABSTRACT

An Advisory Committee reports the results of their efforts in identifying and anticipating consumer problems with packaging and labeling practices and in formulating voluntary action programs in this area. Listed are 13 principles that businesses should provide and/or consider in packaging and labeling consumer products. A bibliography of source materials is included. (SH)

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Guiding Principles for Responsible

Packaging & Labeling

Report of the Sub-Council On Packaging and Labeling of the National Business Council for Consumer Affairs

June 1972

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Norman C. Alt
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Washington, D. C. 20230

Honorable Peter G. Peterson
Secretary of Commerce
Washington, D. C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Since the formation of the National Business Council for Consumer Affairs, in August, 1971, the Sub-Council on Packaging and Labeling has been actively engaged in identifying and anticipating consumer problems with packaging and labeling practices and in formulating voluntary action programs in this area.

These efforts have resulted in the attached "Guiding Principles for Responsible Packaging and Labeling" which we are pleased to transmit for your consideration.

It is our conviction that the widespread implementation of these Principles by businesses and industry associations will result in more responsive and responsible packaging and labeling.

We believe this will result in better informed and better served consumers.

And we intend to do our best as individual members of the business community and as leaders of major corporations to bring about the development of specific policies and manufacturing practices consistent with these principles.

We respectfully recommend that you give the Principles broad distribution within the private sector and that you urge the corporate community to accept and apply them as widely as possible.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Brooker, Chairman
National Business Council
for Consumer Affairs

James P. McFarland, Chairman
Sub-Council on Packaging
and Labeling

Donald S. Perkins, Co-Chairman
National Business Council
for Consumer Affairs

Robert O. Aders, Vice-Chairman
Sub-Council on Packaging
and Labeling

Sub-Council Action

The Packaging & Labeling Sub-Council specifically sought broad consumer, industry and trade association participation throughout its deliberations and preparation of the statement of the Guiding Principles for Responsible Packaging and Labeling.

Both written and oral comments from a wide variety of interests were considered. In addition, the Sub-Council studied reports on consumer research undertaken by industry associations, universities, and others.

During its working sessions, formal presentations were made to the Sub-Council by the following individuals:

David A. Swankin, Consumers Union
James S. Turner, Consumer Action for Improved Foods
Esther Peterson, Consumer Advisor, Giant Food, Inc.
Raymond Stokes, Director, Consumer Research Institute
John Gomilla, Branch Chief, Regulatory Guidance Division
Food & Drug Administration
Earl Johnson, Attorney, Division of Special Projects,
Bureau of Consumer Protection
Federal Trade Commission

Against this background, the Sub-Council drafted an initial statement of the Guiding Principles for Responsible Packaging and Labeling. This statement was critiqued by a number of consumer and industry organizations. After consideration of these comments the final statement enclosed in this report was drafted and adopted by the Sub-Council.

Guiding Principles for Responsible Packaging and Labeling

PREAMBLE

It is our intent that these guiding principles be given the broadest possible application wherever they would assist the consumer in making his purchase or use decision and wherever the value received by consumers from their application exceeds the cost of their implementation. We urge industry associations and individual businesses to develop specific policies and manufacturing practices consistent with these principles.

Packages and labels should meet the consumer's need for useful information to facilitate value comparison prior to purchase and to promote the economical and safe use of the product after purchase. The information should be presented in a clear and conspicuous manner. The seller or supplier should be able to document adequately all performance, safety or economy claims listed or depicted on the package or label.

More specifically, businesses should provide the following information on packages or labels of *consumer products* unless the provision of such information would be clearly irrelevant within the context of the total circumstances surrounding the sale.

- 1. The identity of the product by its common or usual name, description, generic term, or the like,
- 2. The net quantity of the product in terms of weight, measure, size, or numerical count,
- 3. The name and address of the manufacturer, packer or distributor,
- 4. A prominent warning of imminent hazards inherent with the use, maintenance, storage, or disposal of the product, and a description of the necessary treatment or antidote if the warning is ignored or misunderstood,
- 5. Clear and complete directions for use and care of the product. Separate use and care instructions should be provided for those products not normally consumed from or stored in the original package,
- 6. Relative price information in a convenient and understandable form. Price information should be displayed at the point of purchase when it is impractical for the seller or supplier to include price on the package or the label,

- 7. The date beyond which the product should not be sold if the product is perishable,

Businesses should also provide the following information on packages and labels of *processed food products* offered for sale.

- 8. The size, weight, or measure of servings where the label states number of servings,
- 9. The common or usual name of ingredients or, where appropriate, the class of ingredients, listed in order of decreasing predominance. The most significant ingredient listed by percentage if it will aid consumers in assessing economic value and food quality,
- 10. A statement of nutrient value conforming to applicable federal guidelines.

In addition to the above, all packages should contain the full and declared weight, measure or numerical count and be filled as full as practicable in accordance with good business practices. Packages should be designed to:

- 11. Protect the quality and form of the product,
- 12. Protect the persons who come into contact with the product during use, storage, maintenance and disposal,
- 13. Offer sufficient variety to serve the varying needs of consumers without unnecessarily complicating selection.

Finally, for the benefit of society in general, businesses should conserve natural resources in the original package, encourage reuse of both packaging materials and packages themselves, and, minimize pollution in the disposal process.

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